

T W O
SERMONS

PREACH'D in the
Cathedral-Church

O F
WORCESTER.

On the following Subjects

(viz.)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| I. The Providence of God,
the Security of good Men. | I | finishing our course with
joy, and the necessary means
of doing it. |
| II. The great Importance of | | |

By the Late Learned DR. STAPLETON, a
PREBENDARY of the said **CHURCH**.

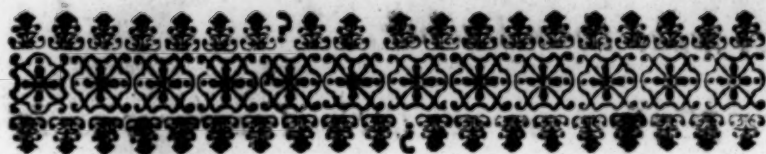


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THE P R E F A C E.

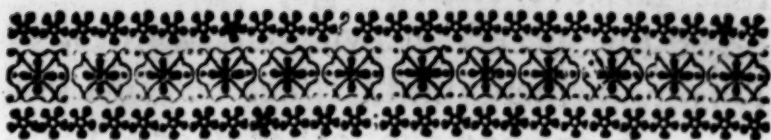


*I*f it be necessary to give any Account of the following Sermons, the Reader may understand that they were transcribed from the Author's own Manuscripts, for some who had heard them preach'd, and were very desirous to have the further perusal of them for their own private Benefit. And tho' they were not prepar'd, nor then design'd for the Press, yet a very high Esteem for the Doctor's Memory, and an equal desire of communicating to others the Benefit of two such useful and excellent Discourses, has prevail'd with his Friends, into whose Hands those

those Copies were intrusted, at length to make them Publick.

If there are any little Inaccuracies in them, owing either to the in-attention of the Author or the fault of the Transcribers, there needs no other Apology than that they were not intended for the Press; and whatever they are, they must disappear to those, who know how to esteem as they ought, that admirable Spirit of Piety and fine Reasoning that runs in so clear a Manner thro' the whole.

'Twere much to be wish'd, and wou'd be a singular Benefit to the Publick, if the Person into whose Hands they are fallen, wou'd raise up a Monument more worthy of the Author's Memory, by publishing many more of those excellent Discourses that gave such exquisite pleasure to his Hearers, and have left so grateful a Sense of him in their Minds. And if the Reception these find might invite him to do so, it wou'd be a very sensible Satisfaction to those that have communicated these, and be thought a valuable Advantage of the publishing of them.



Romans viii. 28.

*And we know that all things
work together for good, to
them that love God.*



THE Assurance that all Events in the *moral* World as well as all Effects in the *natural*, are directed by an All-wise and infinitely good God, to the Benefit and Advantage of his faithful Servants, is both a great Encouragement to Christians to do their Duty, and also a mighty Support in all their Sufferings. When we know that our Prayers are ever heard, and that, tho' what we pray for be not granted, yet something as good or better is alway given us ;---when we are convinc'd that

that however things go, whether the hop'd-for Success crown our Wishes, or Disappointments and Crosses be our Lots, yet both one and the other work together for our greater Good, this must engage us to admire and adore the indulgent Providence which disposes Things thus, and with a Resignation and Cheerfulness, entirely to rely upon that God, who takes such Care of us, and by the properest Means (because of his own choosing) leads us to Happiness.

WE know, being fully persuaded both by the clear Evidence, and infallible Certainty of that Principle which demonstratively infers this Truth, that all Things work together for good; all seeming Contingencies, as well as what comes to pass in the settled course of things, do in the Issue wonderfully conspire to the best and eternal Interest of them that love God---of the true, faithful, and obedient Christians: We are assur'd of this, I say, because the express Promise of God declares that he will, and our own Reason
and

and Experience tells us that he does continually interpose, powerfully guide, and unerringly accomplish all the Affairs of his Creatures; and in the End, tho' we do not alway discern the Means, does thus bring about the eternal Bliss of those that believe, and trust, and love HIM.

THIS Christian Doctrine I now advance directly in Opposition to those amongst us, who do either too much cry up the force of natural Reason and Liberty of Man's Will; or depress God's Inspection of our present, and Prescience of our future Actions: who to open the way to Free-thinking and licentious Living, would remove the insurmountable Obstacle of God's immediate Presence with, and Providence over us. Against the Men of these loose Principles which, 'tis notorious, do so fatally influence the generality of our Practice, I wou'd maintain and illustrate the Assertion of the Apostle in the Text. And however I may succeed in the Undertaking, I can't but think I shall have the good Wishes

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of all that hear me, because I propose nothing but what has the universal Suffrage and Acknowledgment of all that wou'd seem to be of any Religion, and is indeed the great Anchor and Support of all that are of the true, it being that without the firm Belief of which we Christians should be of all Men most Miserable.

Now that I may do this the more effectually, I shall (first) lay before you some familiar and obvious, but withal the most unquestion'd and concluding Considerations that occur, to convince you that God's Providence does gently, yet effectually cause all things whatsoever to work together for our good.

2dly. I shall in some Instances deduce that good and advantage which from hence does result to all that sincerely love God.

I am first to lay before you some Familiar, &c.

I said God does *effectually* cause all things to work together for our good; Because with respect to his Almighty Power there is not any Creature can pretend to resist his Will, nor can oppose any Bar or Hindrance to his Design. I said *gently*; because with respect to his infinite Wisdom, he conducts all his Creatures to their end by ways proportion'd to their several Natures, without putting a force upon their natural Instinct, or laying any restraint upon the choice of free Agents. And thus he turns them as he sees fit, and brings about his Purpose and Design.

To evidence this, I propose the Considerations that offer themselves to this purpose by these Steps and Degrees.

1st. It is to be consider'd that we can't survey the World about us, without observing that things do proceed in a wonderful Order and Harmony, and visibly contribute both to the Beauty of the Uni-

verse, and to the Use and Convenience of the several Particulars therein contain'd. That this is so, is I think acknowledged by all, and is the immediate Object of our Senses. Now I wou'd demand how it comes to be so, and what is that Cause which does so regularly conduct each thing to its proper good, and to the Perfection of the whole? How it comes to pass that * Creatures, confessedly void of Understanding, Sense and Life, should do their Work with so much Art and Method? How come they to take such Measures and use such Means to bring about their Ends, without being capable of either knowing the End or discerning the Means? Must we not acknowledge some superior Cause which supplies the Want of Choice, and Defect of Reason? Is there not a Wisdom that conducts and guides their Actions?— I will not ask what gives Motion to the heavenly Bodies ; but I wou'd fain know

* Sun, Moon, &c.

why they keep on in so constant a Course, and produce the different Seasons in that steady Variety, which is absolutely necessary to the Life and Sustenance of all that Breaths? Why does the Sun so duely approach and retire, rise and set, and so opportunely point out the Time,--- now for the Labour and Toil,---and then for the Rest and Repose both of Man and Beast? What restrains the Waters of the Sea, which in their own Nature wou'd cover the Earth, and minutely seem to threaten an universal Deluge? Surely it can be nothing, but that Providence which has prescrib'd its Bounds and Limits, and has said to it, *Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud Waves be staid.* Job xxxviii. 11. What gives fertility to the Earth, and makes it produce its Fruits in such Abundance? Is it not the indulgent Care of our heavenly Father who thus provides for the Necessity and Convenience of his Children? Who is it that makes the Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sends Rain on the Just and on the Unjust,

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but the great Master of the Family, who thus supplies the Occasions of his Servants who are all employ'd in his Work,---all serving the designs of his Providence,---and all busied in doing his Will on Earth as it is in Heaven?

2dly. To go a little higher, there is a Class of Beings which tho' as void of Understanding as the foregoing, yet being endu'd with Sense are not determin'd to one Object only, but do exert a great Variety of Actions; and yet their doings can't be accounted for, without allowing the immediate Hand of Providence. Do but advert to the Wonders of the most inconsiderable Insects, and it is impossible not to discover most evident Footsteps of an artful and wise Contrivance. See with what wonder the Spider provides for her Sustenance, and with what cunning she spreads her Nets to entangle the unwary Prey! It is our every day's Wonder to observe the early Provision the Fowls of the Air make for the Time to come, and with what inimitable Artifice

fice they build their Nests for the better
 Reception of their future young Ones.
 What shall we say to the formed Socie-
 ties, the regular Government, and the
 united Labour and Concurrence in lay-
 ing up their common Store, which is so
 well known and so often refer'd to, in
 the Bees and the Ants; to whose Dili-
 gence and Address the Holy Scriptures
 point, and to whose Example they direct
 the sluggish Man to be better instructed?
 But whether or no we will learn this Les-
 son of Industry from them, there is ano-
 ther we can hardly avoid: We can't
 wink so hard but we must discern a Pro-
 vidence working in, and with these his
 irrational Creatures. For we shall not
 surely ascribe these Effects to any inter-
 nal Principle of Reason and Wisdom in
 those things, which modern Philosophy
 will allow to be but mere Matter and
 Motion, and yet 'tis plain, they pursue
 their proper Ends with more Order and
 Steadiness than Man, with all his pre-
 tensions to Knowledge and Prudence, does
 his. We can't father these constant and
 uniform

uniform Proceedings on blind Hazard, or giddy Chance: There is nothing in Nature more unlike, than fortuitous Events are to those Products of Design and Contrivance. Shall we say all this is done by natural Instinct? If by this Term we mean any Principle within the things themselves, by the Force and Vertue of which they Act thus; then why do we call them irrational Beings? Why do we place them in a lower Rank than Man? Why do we say they are endow'd with nothing but Sense, if with that? But if by Instinct we mean the Influence of the God of Nature upon them, then what I am contending for, is granted, *viz.* That all this is perform'd by the guidance of Providence, That there is in the World a supreme Reason which has stamp'd some faint Resemblance of it self upon all its Creatures, That there is a Sovereign Wisdom which sustaines, actuates, and directs all things to the Ends he has design'd them; That from the View both of the One and the Other, we can't be Ignorant tho' we wou'd, we can't but know

know that God does preside in the World, and that by Him all things work together for good to us.

3^{dly}. To advance one step more, The Hand of Providence is no less Conspicuous in the Government of the rational World of Man, whom God has left in the Hand of his Counsel, endow'd with Liberty and Choice, and made Lord and Master of his own Actions. For tho' we may, and God knows too often do, make a perverse Use of this Liberty,—do follow our own Ways,—do find our own Pleasure, and do speak our own Words; yet, whatever we think of it, we are in Truth as much under the Power of Providence as if we did otherwise. 'Tis true, from hence do proceed all the Errors, Disorders, Wars, Destructions and Calamities that are, all the Sin and Wickedness that is committed in the World; which tho' directly opposite to God's Commands, yet are not exempted from *his* Management who well knows how, and always does bring some great Good out of those

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greatest Evils. Whatever road the Sinner takes, whether he goes astray in the By-paths of his own choosing, or runs unthinkingly on in the Broad-way that leads to Destruction, he still travels whether he will or no in the Tract of Providence, and can never frustrate its Purpose: God always brings about the Execution of his Designs, as much by the Obstinate Resistance of Men's perverse Will, as by their Obedience; as well by their Refractoriness, as in doing their Duty. For in what State soever they are, they are always Subservient either to the declaring his Mercy, or to the Manifestation of his Justice; his Mercy, if they return from their evil Way; his Justice, if they persevere in their Impieties.---That he may not put a Constraint on their Liberty, he permits them, since they are resolv'd to do so, to transgress his Laws; but then this still leads to their final Estate,--- *Misery*, if they will die in their Sins; or *Happiness*, if they do repent and live a new Life. And thus Providence is never disappointed, but makes each

each Person instrumental to his Glory, which is illustrated both in our Salvation and in our Loss, both by the Exercise of God's Justice, and by the Expression of his Mercy.

Hence you can't but see that all Men both good and bad, notwithstanding their Liberty and Choice, do effectually contribute to the Designs of Providence and Glory of God: But with this sad difference, those do it willingly and designedly, these besides and against their Intentions; those by their submissive Compliance with, these by their stubborn Resistance of God's Will; those do it to their unspeakable Bliss, these to their utter Destruction. What, tho' the Enemies of Providence presume to deny, or despite his taking Notice of them? What, tho' the Libertines struggle with their Yoke, or break thro' the Fences of the Divine Law? Shall this destroy the Nature of Things? or make *That* cease to be, which is the Foundation of all Beings? No, These Men may abuse their Free-

will: Instead of following those Methods which Providence chalks out to lead them to Heaven, they may comply with the impetuous Motions of their Passions and Appetites, their disorder'd Affections and ungovernable Lufts; but this is so far from perswading us against, that they themselves become Arguments for, and Instances of the being of Providence. They will not comply with the Proposals God offers to bring them to Life, therefore they shall be constrain'd to obey his Sentence that dooms them to Death; they will not submit to the gentle Government of his Goodness and Indulgence, they therefore ingulf themselves under the Dominion of his Severity and Vengeance; they will not take up the easy Yoke and light Burthen of God's Commands, they are therefore consign'd over to the rigorous Slavery of their own Sins, and insupportable Tyranny of their Adversary the Devil.

On the other Hand, the good Christian is so clearly perswaded of this Truth by
Reason

Reason and Discourse, so heartily satisfied of it by the Testimonies of his Faith, and so fully convinc'd by his own Sense and Experience, that he entirely resigns himself up to, and without reserve reposes and rests himself upon God's good Providence, as well knowing in all the various Turns and Dispensations of it, all Things shall work together for his good. For God's Truth has never fail'd any that ever rely'd upon it, nor balk'd the Expectation of him that trusted it; does always relieve his Necessities, and sweeten his Afflictions. The Eye of Providence is open and awake to his Preservation, tho' it sometimes may perhaps seem to Slumber;---- God is always near to and present with him, even at those very Moments when he appears to be withdrawn. And tho' God doth sometimes suffer his Servants to groan under Want, or Pain, or Grief, or Trouble; yet even this very thing is an Instance of his Love, who by this very Means gives occasion to exercise their Patience, try their Vertue and augment their Charity here, that so they
may

may encrease their Reward and enhance their Glory hereafter. And thus his Providence does more conspicuously appear, whilst his infinite Wisdom contrives to bring the greatest Advantages from that very Thing which seem'd most irksome and grievous to them ;--whilst he turns all Events to their Good, even those which appear'd most of all other to hurt and endamage them,---whilst he unerringly conducts them to their Home by Ways so admirably concerted, that they never fail of accomplishing their appointed Work.

4thly, and *Lastly*. If after what has been said, any Doubt of this can remain in your Minds, consider some of the many Instances in Holy Writ, wherein the Divine Providence has actually appear'd in Behalf of his People, and that in so astonishing a manner, as no human Prudence cou'd foresee, nor can any natural Reason account for. Doubtless *Joseph's* Brethren look'd no farther than the Sacrificing him to their Envy and Jealousy, when

when they sold him for a Slave into *Egypt*; but Providence had a very different Purpose to bring about by this Act,—not only *Joseph's* strange Advancement, but the Preservation of his Father and Family (and among them those very Persons who sold him) from perishing by Famine. It is *Joseph's* own Reflection (*Gen. xlv. 5, 8. and l. 20.*) more than once; for thus he accosts his Brethren, *Now therefore* (says he) *be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me hither: for God did send me before you, to preserve Life.* And again, *So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.* And again, *But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this Day, to save much People alive.*----Could any thing appear more fortuitous and accidental, than that *Kish* should lose his *Asses*, and send his Son *Saul* to seek them? Yet it was still more unexpected and surprising even to *Saul* himself, that instead of them he shou'd find a Kingdom. The King of *Egypt's* Edict was intended to destroy

destroy the *Israelite* Children, lest they should multiply, and so get them up out of the Land: Yet in Pursuance to this very Edict *Moses* is expos'd, *Pharaoh's* own Daughter finds him,—nourishes him for her own Son,---and by these strange Ways he is preserv'd to be the Person by whose hand God wou'd give his People a wonderous Deliverance. But above all, observe that both Rulers and People had their several Aims in the Death of our Lord and Saviour: The *Jews* Malice and the *Romans* Policy, *Pilates* Fear, and *Herods* Jealousy, the *Chief Priests* Envy, and *Judas's* Treason, all concurr'd to bring him to his Execution: Yet by his Death are we sav'd,—by his Stripes are we heal'd,---by these unlikely Means was wrought the greatest Blessing the World ever receiv'd,---the Salvation of lost Mankind. And whatever the several Persons concern'd in this Tragedy propos'd to themselves: The Scripture assures us, (*Acts* iv. 28.) that, *All these were gather'd together, but for to do whatso-*

whatsoever thy Hand, O God, and thy Counsel determin'd before to be done.

Having thus far endeavour'd to make good the Apostle's Doctrine against the Enemies of Providence, by shewing how all Things work together for good to us; I wou'd now apply it to ourselves, and improve it by laying before you some of the many Advantages which do from hence accrue to them who sincerely love God.

1st. Do we know that all things work together for Good to them that love God? then may we securely set our Hearts at rest, and enjoy a peaceful Tranquility, and serenity of Mind under all the Hurry and Bustle, in all the Confusion and Disturbance of a busy and troublesome World. For when we consider that all Affairs here, which at first View seem to depend more on Chance and Accident, than on Prudence and Reason, where Malice is successful, and Injustice triumphs over Righteousness, where the

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blackest

blackest Crimes escape oft unpunish'd, and encrease and go on with a higher hand and more bare-fac'd Insolence, by reason of this Impunity; and that notwithstanding this Appearance, we are assur'd that they are all govern'd by an unerring Wisdom, and a most powerful Providence which does neither order nor permit any thing, but with exact Justice, and infinite Goodness; we then find abundant Cause to satisfy all Doubts and Objections of our Mind, to silence all the Murmurs of our Reason, and we repose ourselves on this infallible Conduct and Disposal, with an entire Resignation of our shallow Judgment. We are now no more surpriz'd or stagger'd at the Prospect of prevailing Iniquity, at discountenanc'd Vertue, at banish'd Justice, at oppress'd Innocence and despis'd Religion: Because we are thoroughly perswaded that none of these Things could be so, unless our God saw fit to permit and suffer them; and that he wou'd never suffer them, unless he had very good Reason for doing so, unless it were

were incomparably more for the common Good, and for our Advantage in particular to permit, than to prevent them.

'Tis no matter that these Reasons are not known to us, 'tis enough that they are well understood and approv'd by God, and that they shall hereafter be discovered to us too, when the Light of Glory shall have dispell'd our Darkness and clear'd up our Understanding. 'Tis of no Consequence neither that by the secret Procedure of Providence there is much Evil tolerated, as the Contempt of good Men, and the Flourishing of Bad, the Misery of People, and Destruction of Nations,—and what is worst of all, the irreparable loss of many Souls: for tho' all this be too just a Subject of Grief to any thinking Person, yet this Grief is over-ballanc'd and silenc'd by remembering that it is God's good pleasure upon most righteous Motives, to let them be just thus; and that the same God, who connives at present at these Mischiefs, knows how to repair and make amends with

Interest for them,---- Nay more, from those very Ills to extract the most sublime and valuable Good. What can be conceiv'd more dismal and shocking than the Fall of Man? And yet God made this the Occasion of so unspeakable a Blessing to us by the Incarnation of the eternal Word and the most inestimable Price of our Redemption, that this very Misery, how deplorable soever in itself, is improved to the greatest Happiness that ever was bestowed upon us. If we cou'd suppose that some Occurrences might be contriv'd to the greater private Benefit of some particular Persons, yet it is certain they cou'd not be better manag'd for the publick Good of the whole, nor for the end God proposes in all his Works, the Interest of his Glory, and the Manifestation of his Divine Attributes. For if there were no Sinners tolerated, how could his Patience and Long-Suffering be evidenc'd in his bearing with, and waiting for their Repentance? How cou'd his Mercy be declar'd in pardoning, or his Justice in punishing them?

2dly.

2dly. If we know that all Things work together for good to them that love God; if we have Faith enough steadily to rely upon *this* Promise, we shall undoubtedly experience a full Assurance and unshaken Security in all those Dangers that do, or can threaten us: Because Providence, who does more heartily espouse our Interest, and with more Concern and Efficacy than we ourselves can be conceived to do, does ever encompass us with his Protection,---- cover us with his Shield,---- and defend us from whatever can truly be said to annoy us. For who is he that will hurt us, if we be Followers of that which is good? No, God does in all our Straits and Temptations prevent us with the Assistance of his Grace, and acquaints us that his Grace is sufficient for us: He does support our Courage against all the Frowns and Attacks of the World; he inspires us in all our Difficulties with an undaunted Resolution, and preserves us from dreading any thing to a criminal Degree,
and

and from fearing any thing so much as the offending or displeasing Him. Hence proceeds that Indifference for all things here below,---that unmov'd Constancy which we can't but observe and admire in the good Christian. When exercis'd with the most violent Shocks of Fortune, and toss'd on the threatening Billows of a tempestuous World, he quietly reposes himself on the Testimony of a good Conscience---an undaunted Integrity---and a firm Reliance on the Care of Providence; he laughs at all the Designs, the Malice either of Men or Devils can form against Him, and at all the impotent and vain Efforts they make to drive him from his Hold: Because he has fix'd himself upon a Rock, and is supported by an Arm infinitely superior to that of his Enemies and Oppressors. Let the Rain descend, and the Floods come, and the Winds blow, they may beat upon the Foundation of the Structure, but it can't fall; for the Gates of Hell can't prevail against this so well plac'd a Confidence. He knows with the (*Heb. xiii. 5, 6.*) Apostle who it is that

that has said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. And therefore may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what Man shall do unto me.* (Psal. xxiii. 4.) *Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the shadow of Death, I will fear no evil: for thou, O God, art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff they comfort me.*

3dly. This Knowledge that all things work together for good to them that love God, administers an inexpressible Comfort, Consolation and Joy under all those Crosses and Sufferings, which in the Esteem of the World are reputed Adversities and Afflictions. For when God visits us with Sickness or Pain, with Poverty or Disgrace, with the Loss of Estate or of Friends, what we most set our Hearts upon, or the like, we are assured that nothing of all this cou'd befall us, unless God had order'd it so, having seen it most expedient for us; whose Wisdom in it we can't question, and whose Kindness we can't suspect. No; we know his Mercy is often then the most indulgent

gent to us, when he uses the greatest Severity, and when we smart most under his Rod; and those Lashes which he inflicts are the best Evidences of his Tenderness and Love to us, because they are the very Methods by which he usually brings his greatest Favourites to himself. Perhaps he sees it necessary thus to wean us from our Fondness for this Life, where if every thing about us were easy and convenient we shou'd mistake it for our Home, and fancy it good for us to be Here, and consequently shou'd never desire nor think of that better Place which he has prepar'd for us. 'Twas St. Peter's Case at our Lord's Transfiguration, but the Holy Spirit tells us, *he then knew not what he said, (Luke ix. 33.)* Perhaps he is pleas'd to shew us the Folly of our Wishes when we pretend to choose for ourselves, and to bless us with such a Condition which of all others we should least have desired. 'Tis too much to be happy both here and hereafter. *Abraham* told the rich Man so, (*Luke xvi. 25.*) *Son remember that thou in thy Life-time*
re-

receivedst thy good Things, and likewise Lazarus evil Things: But now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. If so, Lord! give me my Comforts hereafter! Providence well knows that Riches, and Honours, and Pleasures are the Accommodations of that Road which leads to Destruction; he therefore points out to them that love him a more rugged Path, and thro' Disgrace and Contempt leads them to Glory,--- thro' Sorrows and Troubles to everlasting Rest,---thro' Humiliation to Honour,---and thro' the Crots to a Crown. Perhaps our Circumstances require that we should be tried or refin'd: He who best knows this, commits us to the Furnace of Tribulation to purge away our Dross, and to prove the sincerity of our Faith;---he by Mortification pares off what is amiss, superfluous, or imperfect, that so he may polish, compleat, and more exactly conform us to the Image of his suffering crucified Son.

I do not say this without good War-
rant, for we have the Example of all true

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Lovers

Lovers of God that are gone before us, who thus thought, and thus practis'd; who in all their Disappointments and Afflictions not only silently submitted to, but comforted themselves, rejoyced, and gloried in them. Thus the first Christians rejoyced in Hope, and not only so, but gloried in Tribulation also. *Rom. v. 2, 3.* Thus *St. Paul* (*2 Cor. xii. 10.*) took pleasure in Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses for Christ's Sake, and gloried in them only: (*Gal. vi. 14.*) *God forbid that I should Glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World.* Thus the other Apostles (*Acts v. 41.*) departed from the Presence of the Council, rejoycing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his Name. A very Heathen could observe how glorious and divine a Spectacle it was to see a good Man wrestling with his adverse Fortune: How much more so must it be, to behold a Christian bravely holding out against all the Attacks of the World and Satan?

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Could we but view St. *Paul* dragging his Chains which he wore for the Sake of his Master, doubtless he wou'd appear more August and Illustrious than the proudest Conqueror in the midst of his Splendour and Triumphs; Ay, and I add that God, when he call'd him thus to suffer for him, bestow'd a greater Mark of his Favour upon him than when he caught him up to the third Heaven.

4thly, and *Lastly*. Do we indeed profess to know that all things work together for good to them that love God, and please our selves with being of that happy Number? How is it then that we are not asham'd to betray so much importunate Care and Solitude to acquire so much Discontent and Uneasiness in the want of the trifling Conveniences and Superfluities of this Life? With what Face can we indulge that Spleen, Chagrin, and Melancholy which is now the real or fancied Distemper so much in Fashion? Where the Disease is not in the Body, but in the Mind; where Vapours

may be pretended, but dislike of our Circumstances is in truth our Aile; there surely this Truth, were it heartily believ'd, wou'd be a Sovereign Cure. See how our Saviour applies the Remedy! If Providence with a liberal Hand supplies all the Wants of the most inconsiderable of his Creatures; If he feed the young Ravens that call upon him; If he clothe the Grafs of the Field, which to Day is and to Morrow is cast into the Oven; If a Sparrow can't fall to the ground without your heavenly Father, and the very Hairs of your Head are all numbred; How can this Providence ever be supposed to abandon *Man* the Master-piece and finishing stroke of the Creation, which alone bears the Image and Resemblance of Himself, and is the chief Object of his Care and Love? Will he suffer him to perish thro' Want, or Hunger, or Nakedness? Can we ever despair of a seasonable supply? I am sure he has commanded us to take no thought what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or where-withal we shall be clothed;---Has
told

told us our Heavenly Father knows we have need of all these things; and if we do our Part, all these shall be added unto us. If Providence supply the Sinner, his Enemy, with enough and to spare; If he furnish him with Conveniences and Superfluities, with Riches, Honours and Pleasures; How can his good and faithful Servants distrust him for Necessaries? He need not if he credit the Observation of the Psalmist as to matter of Fact. *Psa. xxxvii. 25. I have been young, and now am old; (says he) yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their Bread.* If God sometimes appears slack (as some Men count slackness) in coming to our Succour and Relief, it is doubtless to let us feel our own Weakness and Insufficiency, and lead us in our Wants to apply with more Fervour and Faith to his Bounty. If he do not furnish Fuel to our Extravagance, Pride, or Luxury; this is the greatest Expression of his Care for us, lest those things should deceive us into a Perswasion that this World is all we are to hope for or expect.

pect. If God do not visibly show'r down Abundance upon us, yet there is no good Man but does perceive a secret Blessing going along with the little he has, prospering all he does, and sweetning all with a contented, satisfied Mind.

I would not be understood as tho' this were to encourage you to quit your honest Callings, and expect Providence should support you in Idleness: No, however he causes things to work together for your good, it is still upon the supposal that you put to your helping Hand,--- concurr and co-operate with him both to the Maintenance of your Body and the Sanctification of your Soul. That which the Gospel condemns is that restless, eager Importunateness for the good things of this Life,--- those unjust Repinings that you enjoy no more, and Doubts and Fears of losing what you do enjoy,--- that perpetual Solitude to supply your present Wants and prevent your future. You must then go on in your lawful Employments, but without too great Application

plication and Passion; you must provide for your Occasions, but without too much Concern and Uneasiness; you must be diligent in your Business, but without Murmuring and Repining if the Event does not answer your Expectation; because the Success does not depend upon *you*, but upon *Providence* who directs the good and the bad Issues, and makes the one as well as the other subservient to your great End and best Interest. So that as you are not too much to hug yourselves upon that which you fancy falls out for the Best, so neither are you to despond upon what has a worse Appearance; because the latter do very often contribute as much, or more to your eternal Happiness, as the former do.

Your main Concern is not, you know, the Care of this Body which is every Moment mould'ring into Dust, but the Salvation of your immortal Part, whose Portion must be an Eternity either of Bliss or Woe. Wherefore *seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness,*
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and all these Things shall be added unto you. Fix your mind on your Home as you ought, and you will not think the trifling Occurrences in your Journey very much worth your Notice; things in which you are so little concern'd as you are in the Times and the Seasons, which it is not for you to know, since the Father has put them in his own Power. Apply your selves with Zeal and Fervour to do your Master's Business, and be assur'd his Providence will not desert or abandon you in your Wants, nor intermit his Care of you. Espouse his Interest heartily, and testify your Love of him by your Obedience, and then never fear that he will be wanting in a suitable Return, *since he has promised that all things shall work together for good to you.*

Upon the whole, methinks, we can't choose but be convinced that we are oblig'd ever to have our Eye fix'd upon God's over-ruling Providence, and that we securely acquiesce in the Care he has engaged himself to take in our Conduct;
----that

---that we receive, as from his Hand, all the Events that befall us, whether they are agreeable to our Wishes or otherwise, since he had decreed them from Eternity, tho' he executes them but in Time, and makes both Prosperity and Adversity equally instrumental to the good he designs us; and that the knowing this should be our support in Distress, our Security in Danger, our Refuge in Want,---and our Safety in all the Revolutions and most ruinous Postures of human Affairs. The condition of this Life, and the Obligations of Charity will not suffer us to be wholly untouch'd at publick Disorders and reigning Impiety; this wou'd be too Stoical an Indifference and Insensibility. But when it is not in our Power to remedy them, nor can we see any Hopes that the World should become better, we ought not to let this ruffle our Quiet or interrupt our Duty: We should lay aside our useless Fears, calm our inward Troubles, and entirely depend upon the adorable Disposals of Providence: *We should silently admire and adore the Depth*

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of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! and confess that unsearchable are his Judgments, and his ways past finding out. Rom. xi. 33.

Do thou then, most indulgent Father, ordain, permit, and dispose of all things as it seems best to thy Wisdom: I submit all I have, and all I am, and entirely resign my self and them to thy good Pleasure. I thankfully receive all from thy Hand without reserve, whether Joy or Grief, whether Abasement or Abundance, whether Disgrace or Honour, whether Life or Death. I have no Desire of my own, but that thy Will may be done, and that I may be enabled to tread that Path thou hast chalked out for me; that so ever under the Guidance of thy Providence I may arrive at that happy Place whither thou callest me, and be admitted to contemplate, to admire, and to praise thee to all ETERNITY.

The End of the First Sermon.

Acts xx. 24.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto my self, so that I might finish my course with joy.



HE finishing our Course with Joy, or the attaining to an happy Conclusion of our Life is, I think, the universal Wish of all Mankind; the bad Man, as well as the good; the careless Trifler, as well as the thinking Christian. He that will not be at the pains to live well, as well as he that does, wou'd yet desire (if a Wish wou'd do the Business) to die well, since he must die one time or other. *Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my last*

last end be like his, was the Prayer of *Balaam* himself at the very time he came with a purpose to curse *Israel*. Now if the worst of Men, and who lead the most dissolute wretched Lives do yet acknowledge the vast Importance of clearing them well, what must *we* think of it, who ('tis to be hoped) do better consider, do daily pray for, and as constantly endeavour to arrive at an happy Death? How shou'd we ever have our approaching Dissolution in View, who daily see and deplore the miserable Departure of the wicked and impenitent, which is not only a violent Tearing of their Bodies from their Souls, but also an eternal Separation of their Souls from their God!

It is not without good Reason that our Life is here resembled to and call'd by the Name of a Course or Race, where our All is at Stake; and where, according as we succeed, we either gain the Prize of eternal Happiness, or lose it for ever. It is no great matter how long or how short the way is; how soon, or how late we arrive, so we do but escape the Dangers

gers that beset us, come safe to the Goal, and be crown'd as Conquerors: -----No matter what Abode we make, what Rank we hold, what Equipage we appear-in in the the World, provided we *finish our Course with Joy*, and from this Vale of Trouble, Labour, and Misery pass, unto our Rest, our Country and our Home. That is not, believe me, the best Life which is stretched out to the greatest Length; but that wherein most good has been done: our age is not so much to be reckon'd of by the Years we have run thro', as by the number and Excellence of the Vertues we have acquir'd, and the Duties we have practis'd. As there are some who are early ripe for Eternity, and do make so speedy Advances in their great Work as to accomplish that in a short space, which others can't compass in a long series of Years; So there are others too who grow old in Time, and yet are but Children in Religion: ---who do but then begin to live, when it is time to die; and when a long Age is worn out, they leave no sign behind them that they ever were at all. What is it to me whether I die in
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this or that Period of my Age? A few Years more or less, make but a very inconsiderable Difference in the Account of one that reckons for Eternity. What is it to me whether I live here in State and Grandeur, or in Retirement and Obscurity,-----in Riches and Abundance, or in straiter and meaner Circumstances,---- in Power and Authority, or in Subjection and Dependence? But it is of infinite Consequence, and my everlasting Interest is concern'd in it, that I depart hence in the fear and favour of God; since an happy or miserable Futurity depends upon the good or bad End and Exit I make.

SUCH thoughts as these the Apostles Words do naturally suggest. For we must observe that they are part of his Discourse to the Elders of the Church when he took his last Leave of them; where (amongst other things) he foretells the Persecution he expected, *viz.* that tho' it was not reveal'd that he was to be put immediately to Death, yet Imprisonments and Sufferings certainly were to be his Lot. *Ver. 22, 23- And now behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things*

things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every City, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me.

Whether this was reveal'd immediately to himself, or rather to others concerning him, as it was to *Agabus*, in the next *Chapter*, *ver. 10, 11*. Upon which he declares how ready he was to endure any thing, so he might but finish his Course with Joy. *But none of these things* (says he) *move, me*, that is, (to express it more agreeably to the words of the Original, tho' to the same sense) *But of nothing of this do I make account, nor is Life it self of any Consideration to me, so that I might finish my Course with Joy*; that is, so as he afterwards explains himself, *2 Tim. iv. 7, 8*. at the nearer approach of his Departure. *I have fought a good fight*, (says he) *I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that Day.*

Now from hence we may take out two very concerning Lessons. *First*, Here we see how very necessary it is that we

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finish

finish our Course with Joy. And *Secondly*, We learn how to do so: Yet neither of these seem to be studied by us with due Application; we seem to be wholly intent upon the easy and commodious Progress in our Journey, without ever thinking what the Conclusion of it will be. I grant we wou'd all desire to die well, but the Mischief is we take no Pains to live so; without which the other is not to be hoped for. Whence I take Occasion to recommend these two Things to your most serious Consideration,

First, Since the Importance of finishing our Course with Joy is so hugely great, I wou'd convince you that *an innocent, useful, holy Life is the best and properest, if not the only way, to arrive at an happy Death*. This is evident from St. Paul's being so regardless of what ever shou'd befall him, and of Death it self, so that he might but be so happy as to attain to this good End.

Secondly, Our whole Life is but one continued Course or Journey towards
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our Grave. I wou'd perswade you as a great Motive to perform it as you ought, *to have your End always in view and ever remember that you are every moment hastening to your Death.* This the Apostles Example powerfully recommends to us, when upon all his Actions he here makes the prospect of his Death to have so great an Influence.

First then, I wou'd convince you that the surest Means of attaining to an happy Death is to lead an innocent, useful, and holy Life. To which purpose consider,

First, That since when we shall have done all these Things which are commanded us, we are yet to acknowledge we are unprofitable Servants. We must not neither pretend to deserve at God's Hands so great a Favour as is the finishing our Course with Joy. No!----Tho' we shou'd have all the Zeal of the Apostles,---the Constancy of the Martyrs the Purity of Angels,---and the Love of the Seraphims,---tho' we shou'd live the holiest Life that ever was lead upon Earth,

yet we shou'd have done no more than is our Duty to do: We cou'd not upon that score claim our Reward as due; it wou'd still be the pure Effect and Result of God's infinite Mercy and Bounty. Yet notwithstanding all this, the Scripture is so full of Exhortations to be righteous, and of Promises to them that are so, that we have all the Encouragement imaginable, upon the prospect of a well spent Life, to trust assuredly that God will continue his Grace to us to enable us to persevere to the end of it. Tho' we are to work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling, yet our christian Hope is ever to be the predominant Vertue in the good Man. We are to rely upon the divine Mercy, and to believe that, if we are not wanting to ourselves, God will undoubtedly accomplish the good Work he has begun in us.

Secondly, Observe farther, that besides the Influence of these christian Duties of *Faith* and *Hope*, there seems to be a positive Connection between the holy Progress and happy Conclusion of our Life.

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And this I do not gather so much from the infallible Efficacy of God's Grace, the Sincerity and Integrity of the Man's designs and the secret Testimony of a good Conscience, as from these repeated Promises of God's Word; where we are assur'd that what we have sowed in our Life we shall reap at our Death;—as we set out, so we conclude our Journey; that the same Master who set us at Work will pay us our Wages, and we shall at length come to that place whither the path we make choice of leads to. From hence the Conclusion is obvious, if we go in at the strait Gate, engage in the narrow rough way, we shall at length find that Life to which these do lead:—if we work in the Lord's Vineyard—bear the Heat and Burthen of the Day, he shall at last pay us what he agreed with us for:— if we strive and run as we ought, we shall undoubtedly obtain the Crown propos'd; and if we sow the seed of Vertue and Grace, we shall at the Harvest reap the Fruits of Happiness and Glory.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, I wou'd confirm this yet farther to you from the Example and Experience of the Best of Men who are gone before us, and who have still declar'd their steady Expectation of their Reward from the present Sense they had of God's powerful Grace with them; and by the Help of *this* their Continuance in practice of their Duty. See with what confidence in the midst of his miseries *Job* promises himself an happy Resurrection and the Blessings that attend it! I can't doubt, (says he) but that my almighty Judge and Saviour is ever ready and able to make good his Promises. So I trust that one Day I shall triumph over Death,--- I shall be reviv'd from my Dust,--- I shall come out of my Grave, and I shall enjoy the beatifick Vision of God in this very Body, which now covered as it is with Sores, shall then shine in Lustre and Rays of Glory. *I know that my Redeemer liveth;---and tho' after my skin worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh shall I see God: Job xix. 25, 26.* To the same purpose St. Paul expresses himself, *2 Tim. i. 12.*

I know (says he) whom I have believed, and I am perswaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that Day: that is, I am well assur'd of his Faithfulness on whom I rely and in whom I repose my Trust; as he is to be my Judge, so he will be my Redeemer too; he will with Interest return that at my Death which I have as it were deposited with him by the Service and Obedience of my Life.

Fourthly. I would add that several of the Attributes and Perfections of God are interested in the crowning a good life with a suitable End: as his *Veracity*, his *Wisdom*, and his *Goodness*. The *infalible Truth of God* is herein concern'd, in as much as he has often pass'd his Word, engag'd his Promise that he will hereafter afford us the like treatment as we use him with here: if we are asham'd of and forsake him in our life time, he will neglect us at our last hours; but that he will protect us against all our Enemies, and make us more than Conquerors, if we confess, obey, and express

press an unfeigned endeavour to please and approve ourselves to him. The *Wisdom of his Providence in the Government of the World* seems to require that God shou'd not propose an uncertain Hire and Wages to those whom he employs in his Work; least by this Means they should grow idle and careless from an Apprehension that their Labour might be in vain: but to excite our Resolution and Courage in keeping his Commandments and using those Means he has prescrib'd, it is reasonable to suppose that he gives sufficient Assurance of obtaining our End and of enjoying the Reward that is propos'd to our Obedience. *God's Mercy* is yet more engag'd in this Affair: for if he often extends his Bounty to the wicked and profane who have provok'd and continued thro' a long Train of Years;—if by a wondrous Indulgence he sometimes opens to such the Sanctuary of Repentance and the Temple of his Glory, is it imaginable he will be less compassionate towards them who have long serv'd him faithfully, and who when thro' surprize and frailty they incurr'd
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his Displeasure, have implor'd his Pardon and Reconciliation by an earnest Sorrow and speedy Repentance? Will he abandon such at the time of their greatest Need, *the hour of Death*? Will he at length suffer *them* to die in their Sins, who have so long liv'd in his Grace and Favour?

If these Reflections have been sufficient to convince you of the necessity of a good Life to the finishing your Course with Joy, give me leave to subjoin a very concerning Direction or two:---the former of which is

1. That you wou'd lay seriously to heart the infinite Risk you run whilst you continue in a state of Sin and Disobedience, or indulge your selves to any one known Transgression of God's Law. For as every hour of your Life may, for ought you know, be your last *it is the Extremity of imprudence and folly to live one Moment in such a condition as you are afraid to die in.* Methinks it is not conceivable how a Christian, who has the Use of his Reason and

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the yet farther Light of his *Gospel-faith*, shou'd ever dare to sleep whilst he knows himself under the displeasure of God, and so expos'd to the immediate danger of being lost eternally; since he may very justly expect it shou'd be his Lot, as it hath been that of many a one in his very Circumstance to have his Sleep conclude in Death, and never to awake again but in irrecoverable Misery. You must acknowledge that as it is very just, so it is not unusual with God to chastise the Presumption of such as go on in a resolv'd Habit of Vice, and think they shall still have time enough to repent;---to punish them, I say, with a sudden and unforeseen Death. And what security do *you* pretend from that which has befallen Thousands of *better* Men than *you*? Why then, I pray, may not the same be *your* Fate? And if it shou'd, *Lord! what wou'd become of you!--you are lost and undone for ever!*

I do not speak this only of the great, clamorous, and flagrant Crimes of the Age; but also of those suppos'd to be less malignant, and but the beginnings of Sin.

I say the Allowance of these is extreamly dangerous, because all Sins are in some sort chain'd together, and we too easily pass not only from one degree, but from one kind to another. The longest Rivers, you know, near the Spring-head are but little Brookes: and the most enormous Disorders in our practice have but the same Original with these lesser faults, which we carelessly disregard. Men do not launch out at once into the wide Ocean of Lewdness and Debauchery, but by slow degrees, by little and little creep on before they can be thorough paced in Villany. So that what we erroneously judge a small fault, a trifle, a trick of Youth, is in truth no such matter; but a daring affront to God, an Act of Rebellion, and perhaps that very thing from which our everlasting Misery derives its Source. We see many Examples of this in Scripture.—*Saul's* utter rejection commenc'd with such a disobedience as he had a plausible Excuse for. He spar'd it seems the best of the Sheep and of the Oxen which shou'd have been destroy'd:

but when charg'd by *Samuel* with it, he pleads that he did so to *sacrifice unto the Lord thy God*. The eternal and temporal misery of all the Sons of *Adam* began with an inconsiderable fault in Appearance,---*the Tasting of a little forbidden Fruit*. The Man that was found gathering a few Sticks on the Sabbath-day was ston'd with Stones, that he died. *Uzzah* put forth his hand to the Ark of God, and took hold of it for the Oxen shook it; and the Anger of the Lord was kindled against *Uzzah*, and God smote him there for his Error, and there he died. The Servant in the Parable that brought his Lord's Talent again without Improvement was an unprofitable Servant, cast into outer darkness. All which shou'd inspire us with a just Horror and Detestation of every Sin, how small soever we are pleas'd to think it, since the very least of all is enough to give occasion to our Ruin, and Rise to our endless Punishment.

The other Direction that I wou'd recommend to you to secure an happy Death

Death is the constant exercise of Prayer. I do not mean only the earnest Imploring the Grace of sincere Perseverance, (which yet God promises to them that ask it aright, when he engages himself to hear all our Requests which are made with Faith;) but I mean also the uninterrupted Attendance upon all the Parts and Offices of divine Worship; and particularly that great solemn one of the HOLY COMMUNION. For this does in a more peculiar manner, when worthily perform'd preserve in the Soul its spiritual Life of Grace, and effectually contribute to its persevering in Righteousness as necessarily as our daily Food preserves and confirms the Strength, Vigour, and Health of our Bodies.—The antient Martyr *Ignatius* calls it the Antidote of Death: intimating that as the fatal Fruit our first Parents eat, spread a secret and destructive Poison through our Frame; so the spiritual food communicates to our Souls such Vertue and Efficacy as preserves them from the fear and attacks of Death. Whence I think it is usually administred
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to sick and dying Christians, to fortify them in those their warmest Conflicts and Agonies, and to arm them against the Fraud and Malice of our grand Enemy when in these their last Moments he never fails to employ his utmost Efforts against them. Besides, the Sacrament is the Earnest of God's favour; and we always reckon our selves certain of a Promise when we have sufficient security of the Performance: So that by the constant Use of this, we lay the strongest Engagement imaginable upon God to continue his Grace to us, *since this is by his own Appointment not only a Means whereby we receive the same, but also a Pledge to assure us thereof.* Now if any of these things move you, Brethren; or if you account your selves dear unto your selves, encourag'd by these Comforts *endeavour to finish your Course with Joy.* And this will bring me to the second thing I advanc'd, namely, That since our whole Life is but one continued Course or Journey towards our Grave; let me prevail with you, as a powerful Motive to per-
thought

form it as you ought, *to have your End always in View, and ever to remember that you are every Moment hastening to your Death.*

To improve this to our further Advantage, I must observe, 1st. the having this thought (*that we must die*) ever present in our Minds, is in Truth a very powerful Incitement and spur to keep us awake and quicken us in the whole Course of our Life. And if, as has been shewn, an holy Life is the only way to promote an happy Death, it will no less evidently appear that the great Inducement to live Holy is to consider that we must die shortly. For (to debate this a little with you) how can any reasonable thinking Man engage his Heart and Affections to any thing here below, when he knows assuredly that he must be forc'd in a very short while to be divorced from it, and bid an eternal Adieu to it? How can he be fond of the World, when he reflects that he is just going to be depriv'd of all its enjoyments? What charm can the the Creature have to allure *him* who has
solemnly

solemnly renounc'd it, and is actually hastening to the Author of his Being? Can we think it worth the while to bestow so much time and cost upon improving and adorning a little imaginary Beauty, which the Grave to morrow perhaps shall change into the most gasty Horror and loathsome Deformity? *Are we not nobly employ'd*, when all our Study is to gratify and pamper a mouldring Carcase, good for nothing but to be a Feast for the Worms? Is it not the most egregious Impertinence to labour, and toil, and sweat in making a Fortune, as we call it, when we foresee all that the Earth can give us in Recompence for our Pain, is *nothing more than a little Dust and Ashes*? In a word, is it not the last degree of Madness to defer our Repentance and securely indulge our Sins, when we are fully convinc'd that, for ought we know, any one moment of our life may be our last, ---may be that fatal one which drops us into Eternity? Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember the End, and thou shalt never do amiss, was the Advice of
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the wise Son of Sirach: (*Eccles. vii. 36.*) that is,---*They shall either not fall at all, or at least will soon rise again by a speedy Repentance.* And how can we avoid observing, Brethren, that Age creeps insensibly upon us---that we every Day draw nearer and nearer to our Grave? Do we not feel Death treading hard upon our Heels, and hear him summoning us to the dreadful Tribunal of our Judge? We do: and if so----say to what Purpose will all those Trifles serve you then, which you now so eagerly pursue; or rather what Regret will you not feel for having so impatiently thirsted after that which you shou'd have either look'd on with Indifference, or rejected with Scorn.---What will you reap from all your mighty Projects, but Air and Smoak! or rather Grief and Torment, for having preferr'd the Shadow to the Substance, Vanity to Truth, and the Glory of this World to the Honour of God! Be not cheated and put upon by vain shew and imaginary Delusions. If you search for Pleasure and Enjoyment, follow after solid and lasting ones: if you eschew Evil and

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Trouble,

Trouble, trouble at the Thoughts of having deserv'd those that are endless.

2dly. I observe again, that it is the most fatal Mistake in the World and the greatest Mischief that can befall us, to live as tho' we were not to die; and to be perhaps surpriz'd by Death, before we so much as bethought our selves whether we were mortal or no.-----This is a Case that often happens; and that it may not be our Case, our Saviour has sufficiently forewarn'd us by an admirable and apposite Parable, *Luke xii. 16.* He tells us the Man dreamt of nothing but how to dispose of his Abundance: he purpos'd to pull down his Barns and build greater: he had much Goods laid up for many Years, and he was full of enjoying them, ----resolv'd to take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But see the Folly of all such Projects! see how soon all these tow'ring Hopes were blasted! For it immediately follows, *ver. 20. God said unto him, thou Fool, this night thy Soul shall be requir'd of thee, then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?*

ed?----There are too many among us, BRETHREN, that do as little care for *the Thought of dying* as that Man did; that start if you do but name *Death* to them, and can't bear any Conversation upon so melancholick a Subject. But alas! the further they think to put the *Evil-Day* from them, the nearer still it approaches; and when they dream of it least, 'tis then very often it knocks at their Door, and obliges them to dislodge. Now all the World owns it JUST in God that *this* shou'd be *so*.----And I can't but think it a great Instance of *his* MERCY too, that the Time of our Death is conceal'd from us: because this is a proper Means to keep us ever on our Guard, and to oblige us to be alway ready and prepar'd to receive it come when it will; which otherwise perhaps we shou'd not be. Hence it is that Death comes upon us in such various Shapes and different Manners. Sometimes he attacks by slow Degrees and at unawares: he lays a thousand Ambuscades for us by Land and by Sea, in the Town and in the Country, in War and in Peace. Sometimes he comes at the

End of a long Sickness; sometimes in the Midst of perfect Health; sometimes in our decrepid Age, and sometimes in our Bloom. Now he uses the outward Instruments of Violence---the Sword, or Fire, or Fall, or the like Accident; and then, inward and hidden Causes---the Burning of a Fever, or the Cold of a Palsy, ---the Inundation of a Dropsy, or the Lingring of a Consumption. ---Now what sleeping is there in the Midst of *so many* Dangers? What Security can we promise our selves among *such unforeseen* Assaults? And if so; see, BRETHREN, the *monstrous Stupidity* of provoking God's *Wrath*, when we are *so uncertain* of our *Life*, and *so unassur'd* of a *sufficient* Space *to sue out our Pardon!*

3dly. I consider another Motive to have our Eye upon our End, that God does often in Justice snatch the Sinner away in the Commission of his Crime and the very Act of his Sin,---Thus it far'd with *Nadab* and *Abihu*; when they presum'd to offer strange Fire, *there went out a Fire from the Lord* (says the Text Lev. x. 2.) *and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.*

Thus

Thus *Corah* and his Company, (*Numb. xvi. 31.*) *the ground clave asunder that was under them, and the Earth open'd her Mouth and swallow'd them up, and they went down alive into the Pit.* Thus *Zimri* and *Cozbi* fell by the Sword and Zeal of *Phinehas.* (*Num. xxv. 8.*) *And the unfortunate Absolom was slain in his Disobedience and Rebellion against his Father.* I shou'd never have done, if I shou'd insist on the several Instances of such as have been caught away in unrepented Sin, who for a *Moment* of *fancied* Pleasure have passed into an *Eternity* of *real* Torment. How many ev'ry Day are surpriz'd in the Design and Contrivance of their Villany before they can compleat it, and justly meet the same Reward of their Purpose as they shou'd have had for the Execution? And how many to that who have a good Resolution of Amendment, do never reach the Time they propos'd to repent in; and so by deferring to the future what shou'd be done at present, do *miserably* die in their Sins? Think of this a little, BRETHREN, and know that it is not impossible that some of you may be of
this

this Number; and perhaps the less you apprehend this Fate, the more likely it is that you will meet with it. This shou'd be seriously consider'd, and it is in truth a very pressing Argument to restrain you from Sin, and improve you in Holiness.--For what Malefactor wou'd have Leisure to repeat his Crime when he is just a going to receive his Sentence from his Judge, or were leading to Execution? What wou'd we not undertake? What do we not vow, to implore the Protection of Heaven when we find our selves on the Brink of a dangerous Precipice, or under the immediate Apprehension of a Shipwreck? 'Tis remark'd in ancient Story, that the Wretch, who whilst entertain'd at a sumptuous Feast had a naked Sword hung over him by a single Hair, had no Stomach to the Delicacies that were set before him so long as he apprehended his impendent Danger. The MORAL is applicable to thee, O Sinner, between whom and the threatning Vengeance of Justice there is nothing but the slender Thread which ties thy Body and Soul together. Now if this Thread shou'd break, as very easily

easily it may by a thousand Accidents, thou canst not foresee what a terrible Condition, ---what irreverfible Misery thou droppeft into. How then can you be one Minute eafy under fuch a difmal Proſpect? How can you preſume to fool and trifle in ſuch apparent Danger? If you are capable of a ſerious Thought or a wiſe Reſolve, does it not concern you to commune with your own Hearts, and by a thorough Amend-ment of your Ways prepare for a comfort-able Death?---How can you promiſe your ſelves *Months* and *Tears* to come, who have not *one Day* your own---not *one Moment* in your Power and Diſpoſal? Why do you defer that to an imaginary Futurity, (which perhaps will never be) which you might at Preſent do towards the working out your eternal Salvation? Happy is that Man who looks upon each Day as his laſt, and accordingly avoids thoſe Sins, practices thoſe Duties, and puts himſelf in that Condition in which he wou'd not fear to be found when ſummon'd to his great Account! --- What wou'd you not do then to ſecure your eternal Welfare? What Vertue wou'd you not practice?

practice?--What Act of Faith, Hope, Love, Contrition, Devotion wou'd you not exert, were you perswaded that you shou'd not live 'till to Morrow? Look upon the present Time as that which may finish your Course and open a Passage to ETERNITY. Do not depend upon the Future, since you have no Promise of it; and you know that many, in better Health than you now are, did not reach it. Live ever in such a State as you wou'd be willing to die in;---and as if you wou'd not be surpriz'd at your Change, how unforeseen soever it may be, be ever in a Readiness and dispos'd to welcome it when ever it comes. 'Tis the great secret Art of living-well, to be perpetually in a Disposition to die daily. We shall never repent the Conduct that is regulated by the Advice which our Death suggests.--Whatever affairs fall under your Deliberation and Debate; consult your *latter End* and take the Resolution which *it* shall inspire. Ask your self what it wou'd be most adviseable to do in this Case if you were now at the last Gasp; and from what you wou'd then think fittest to be done, you discover what
you

you ought to do now. For as the Things of this World do ever blind our Eyes and prejudice our Judgment, it is necessary to remove these Cheats and place our selves in the Circumstances of leaving them, and then our Reason will clear up, our Eyes will be open, and we shall make a true Estimate of the Vanity and Worth of Things.

AND thus, *Brethren*, I have endeavoured to convince you how necessary it is *to finish our Course with Joy*, and have pointed the Way how to do so. It only remains that I close all with the excellent Direction of our LORD himself to this Purpose. (*Luke xii. 35, 36.*) *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye your selves like unto Men that wait for their Lord.*----

You are but Strangers and Pilgrims here upon Earth as all your Fathers were; be ye ever in the posture of Travellers--your Loins girt, your Shoes on your Feet, and your Staff in your Hand, and ready to march when ever your Lord shall call. Let there be nothing in this World capable of detaining you, no irregular Affection to engage you here,-- no vicious Habit to charm you

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to your beloved Lust---no Load of Guilt to retard your Haste towards your return Home, your eternal Repose. You shou'd be as a City plac'd upon a Hill, and the Light of the World. Let your Light then be burning, that is, *Let your light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* Remember the Fate of the foolish Virgins who took no Oyl with their Lamps, but letting them go out, were surpriz'd at the unexpected Arrival of the Bridegroom, and exclude for ever. But be you ever doing your Master's Work; ----ever combating some Enemy,---conquering some Sin, ----improving some Vertue, and practising some Duty;---and *thus making your Calling and Election sure.* THIS is the *only Treasure* you can carry away with you: Your Possessions, your Revenues, your Equipage, your Friends and your nearest Relations will *all forsake you* at the GRAVE; nothing but the *Good or Bad* you do here will *accompany you* to the OTHER WORLD; *let then your Lamps be burning.* You know experimentally, you know that your Happiness

piness is not to be met with Here, but Hereafter. Live then in the constant Expectation of it, in an unwearied Desire and an *holy* Impatience of that Hour which shall transmit you to it. Never repine at your Labours and Afflictions;---he that shall *cure all these Ills, wipe away all these Tears, and reward all your Sufferings* is at Hand: --- *He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.* He shall be here perhaps before you are aware; *Be ye your selves like unto Men that wait for the LORD.*

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